REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 18-26 are pending.

Claims 18-26 are a re-presentation of Claims 9-17 previously presented but are rewritten to correct the numbering (of claim 10), to provide antecedent basis for certain terms as noted on page 2 and for clarity.

Withdrawal of the rejection under 112, second paragraph and the objection noted from Claim 2 (Claim 10) is requested.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that Claim 2 (which should have been claim 10) is allowable and Claims 12 and 16 would also be allowable. Claim 2/10 is now claim 19, claim 12 is now claim 21 and claim 16 is now claim 26.

In view of the following comments, it is requested that allowance for all pending claims be considered.

The rejection of claims 9 and 11 under 35 USC 103(a) citing to DE 10022465 (using the U.S. pub, 2003/0181772) is respectfully traversed.

The present U.S. application is a 371 of PCT/EP04/08192. During the International phase of examination of the PCT, the same DE '465 publication was cited (it is also cited on page 3, lines 13-16 of the specification). Also during this stage, it was apparent why the claims in this application are different from what is described in the DE '465 (or US '772).

The process of the present invention relates to front end acetylene precipitation, instead of heterogeneous catalytic selective hydrogenation as in the DE '465 disclosure (see also page 3, lines 13-16). Accordingly, the claimed process avoids the need to carry out heterogeneous catalytic selective hydrogenation and its costly disadvantages. (see page 3, lines 11-22 of the specification).

An English translation of the International Preliminary Report on Patentability is enclosed. As explained in this report:

The process as per claim 1 (here claim 18) differs from DE '465 in that it relates to front end acetylene precipitation, instead of heterogeneous catalytic selective hydrogenation. The object of the invention is to devise a simple and economic process for separating a C_4 cut by extractive distillation into separate 1,3—butadiene, butene and butane streams, thus reducing or eliminating the problems caused by acetylenes in thermal treatment processes. This object is attained by the process as per claim 1 (Claim 18) in that acetylenes are separated during the C_4 cut extractive distillation process already, i.e. during the so—called front end process.

Acetylenes are the main causes of machine fouling in C_4 cut thermal separation processes and are susceptible to spontaneous decomposition in wide concentration ranges. For this reason, their removal is critical. DE '465 describes the processing of a C_4 cut by extractive distillation and heterogeneous catalytic selective hydrogenation, associated with distillative purification. Consequently, there is no indication of acetylene front end precipitation in a process for separating a crude C_4 cut by extractive distillation with a selective solvent.

The claimed process would therefore not have been obvious in view of DE '465.

Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

A Notice of Allowance is also requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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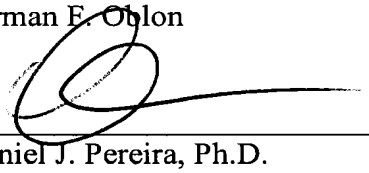
Norman F. Oblon



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